Message

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To: Dunn, Alexandra [dunn.alexandra@epa.gov]
Subject: EPA approves use of insecticide sulfoxaflor | TheFencePost.com

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EPA approves use of insecticide sulfoxaflor

The Environmental Protection Agency today issued a a long-term approval for the insecticide sulfoxaflor, saying that it less of an impact on bees and other non-target creatures than the organophosphates, neonictinoids and other alternatives used to protect crops.

"After conducting an extensive risk analysis, including the review of one of the agency's largest datasets on the effects of a pesticide on bees, EPA is approving the use of sulfoxaflor on alfalfa, corn, cacao, grains (millet, oats), pineapple, sorghum, teff, teosinte, tree plantations, citrus, cotton, cucurbits (squash, cucumbers, watermelons, some gourds), soybeans, and strawberries," EPA said in a news release.

Sulfoxaflor is used to target pests such as sugarcane aphids and tarnished plant bugs, also known as lygus.

In a call to reporters, Alexandra Dapolito Dunn, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, explained that EPA had first approved the use of sulfoxaflor in 2013, but that In 2016, following a 2015 decision of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals vacating the registration of sulfoxaflor citing inadequate data on the effects on bees, EPA reevaluated the data and approved registrations that did not include crops that attract bees.

The 2016 registration allowed fewer uses than the initial registration and included additional interim restrictions on application while new data on bees were being obtained.

"Today's action, adding new uses, restoring previous uses, and removing certain application restrictions is backed by substantial data supporting the use of sulfoxaflor," Dunn said.

She also noted that EPA has been approving use of sulfoxaflor on an emergency basis, that states also need to approve use of the insecticide, and that the emergency approvals may need to remain in effect until the states take action.

EPA did place restrictions on application during bloom so that the sulfoxaflor has "dissipated" before pollinators come to the plant, and added spray drift restrictions on nozzles and imposed wind speed requirements, Dunn said.

Critics have said that sulfoxaflor remains in the soil for long periods, but Dunn said it has a very short half-life, degrades to nontoxic state and half life post application in pollen and nectar is only three days.

"EPA is providing long-term certainty for U.S. growers to use an important tool to protect crops and avoid potentially significant economic losses, while maintaining strong protection for pollinators," said Dunn. "Today's decision shows the agency's commitment to making decisions that are based on sound science."

"Sulfoxaflor is an important and highly effective tool for growers that targets difficult pests such as sugarcane aphids and tarnished plant bugs, also known as lygus," EPA said in its statement.

"These pests can damage crops and cause significant economic loss. Additionally, there are few viable alternatives for sulfoxaflor for these pests. In many cases, alternative insecticides may be effective only if applied repeatedly or in a tank mix, whereas sulfoxaflor often requires fewer applications, resulting in less risk to aquatic and terrestrial wildlife."

EPA's registration also includes updated requirements for product labels, which will include crop-specific restrictions and pollinator protection language.

Dunn said the studies backing up the product's safety were conducted by industry, as is usual, but that they were done under contract by independent labs.

Sulfoxaflor is the active ingredient in a number of insecticides marketed by Corteva Agriscience.

Sent from my iPhone